

Readings

Scripture

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

²³ Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.
- Ephesians 6:10-24 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

But now Paul brings us down to earth, and to realities harsher than dreams. He reminds us of the opposition. Beneath surface appearances an unseen spiritual battle is raging. He introduces us to the devil (already mentioned in Ephesians 2:2 and 4:27) and to certain 'principalities and powers' at his command. He supplies us with no biography of the devil, and no account of the origin of the forces of darkness. He assumes their existence as common ground between himself and his readers. In any case, his purpose is not to satisfy our curiosity, but to warn us of their hostility and teach us how to overcome them. Is God's plan to create a new society? Then they will do their utmost to destroy it. Has God through Jesus Christ broken down the walls dividing human beings of different races and cultures from each other? Then the devil through his emissaries will strive to rebuild them. Does God intend his reconciled and redeemed people to live together in harmony and purity? Then the powers of hell will scatter among them the seeds of discord and sin. It is with these powers that we are told to wage war, or – to be more precise – to "wrestle" (Ephesians 6:12). This metaphor is not necessarily incompatible with that of the armed soldier which Paul goes on to develop, as if he "changed the scenery from that of the battlefield to that of the gymnasium." He is simply wanting to emphasize the reality of our engagement with the powers of evil, and the grim necessity of hand-to-hand combat.

- John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (p. 261-262)

Sermon Outline

Be Strong in the Lord...
Ephesians 6:10-24

The Theology of Tears
Brad Anderson

The church must be strong in the strength of her Lord... (Ephesians 6:10, 2 Timothy 2:1)

As the church is strengthened with the Lord's strength, she will stand...

Knowing that she faces a foe that cannot be defeated in her own strength... (Ephesians 6:12)

Knowing that her Lord has given his spiritual armor to her... (Ephesians 6:11,13-17)

Knowing that prayer in the Spirit will keep her alert... (Ephesians 6:18-20)

Knowing that she shares a common struggle with her members around the world... (Ephesians 6:21-24)

Reflection Questions *(taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)*

- Read Ephesians 6:10-20. How does this description impact your thinking and approach to the new life that Jesus calls you to live?
- From Ephesians 1:19-21, where is Christ now? How does this give us hope as we encounter the evil forces described here? From what you have read in Ephesians (2:1-3, 14; 4:14, 17-19, 26-27; 5:3-18), how are these forces demonstrated in our lives?
- What do verses 11-14 say about how we are to respond to these forces? To resist evil what six pieces of equipment are needed (Read Ephesians 6:14-17)? Whose armor is it? Which piece is the only offensive weapon listed?
- Where does prayer fit in (Ephesians 6:18)? What does Paul pray for (Ephesians 6:19-20)? Why? What does this tell you about spiritual warfare? How are the prayers of Paul for this church, found in Ephesians 1:15-23 and Ephesians 3:14-19, reflected further in this passage on Spiritual Armor?
- From Ephesians 6:23, how do the words "peace", "love", "faith", and "grace" sum up Paul's teaching in this letter? Which means the most to you now? Why?
- As you consider your armor, what parts are in good shape? What is moldy and rusty? What would be necessary for you to do to prepare for battle? What is at stake if you do not prepare?